

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 SAM-01 AID-20 SWF-02 CU-04 OMB-01 EB-11 AGR-20

SY-10 DRC-01 /160 W

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R 221930Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9868

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL KARACHI

AMCONSUL MADRAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NEW DELHI 2632

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, PINT, IN

SUBJ: GUJARAT AND THE NATION

SUMMARY: THE UNDERLYING CAUSES OF THE CRISIS IN GUJARAT--  
FOODGRAIN AND OTHER SCARCITIES, POLITICAL AND OFFICIAL  
INFIGHTING AND CORRUPTION, AND THE CONSEQUENT URBAN (AND RURAL)  
DISCONTENT--ARE PRESENT IN VARYING DEGREES IN EVERY INDIAN  
STATE. THEIR EFFECT IN FUJARAT WAS ALL BUT UNPRECEDENTED--  
VIOLENCE BETWEEN LANDLORDS AND LANDLESS LABORERS, FOLLOWED  
BY SUSTAINED MASS STUDENT-LED DEMONSTRATIONS WHICH BROUGHT  
DOWN THE STATE GOVERNMENT AND MAY YET FORCE NEW ELECTIONS.  
BEYOND THE IMMEDIATE AND NARROWLY POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS  
OF FUJARAT--ON THE UTTAR PRADESH ELECTIONS, ON THE CONGRESS  
AND OPPOSITION PARTIES, ON THE GIRI-GANDHI RELATIONSHIP--  
THERE ARE EFFECTS ON LEVELS OF VIOLENCE, "STUDENT POWER".  
AND THE ARMY. THE MOST BASIC QUESTION RAISED IS WHETHER  
INDIA'S HOARY BUT HERETOFORE EFFECTIVE METHODS OF POLITICAL  
ACCOMMODATION, ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROL, AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT  
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WILL PROVE ADEQUATE SHOULD THE GUJARAT PATTERN BE REPEATED  
ELSEWHERE. IF THE MONSOON IS ADEQUATE, IT APPEARS THAT THE

POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE RESOURCES NOW AVAILABLE TO THE  
CENTRAL GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE SUFFICIENT TO MEET THE TEST.  
END SUMMARY.

1. THE DISTURBANCES IN GUJARAT BEGAN IN EARLY JANUARY IN RURAL  
SURAT DISTRICT, WHERE ARMED AND ORGANIZED LANDOWNERS RESISTED  
STATE GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO PROCURE COARSE GRAINS. (MOST STATE  
GOVERNMENTS MADE ALMOST NO PROCUREMENT EFFORTS.) LANDLESS  
LABORERS, MANY OF THEM TRIBALS, FOLLOWED UP WITH VIOLENT  
ATTEMPTS TO WREST GRAIN FROM THE LANDOWNERS. NEW DELHI NEWS-  
PAPERS TALKED OF "CLASS WAR IN GAJARAT". THE STATE GOVERNMENT  
RELAXED ITS PROCUREMENT DRIVE AND RUSHED GRAIN TO SURAT, THUS  
TEMPORARILY AMELIORATING THE PROBLEM. THE OLD BELIEF THAT THE  
RURAL MASSES ARE INCAPABLE OF SUSTAINED, ORGANIZED AGITATION WAS  
REINFORCED.

2. THE FOCUS OF THE VIOLENCE SOON SHIFTED TO THE CITIES--FIRST  
AHMEDABAD AND BARODA, THEN ALMOST EVERY GUJARAT TOWN. THE  
DEMONSTRATORS CAME PRIMARILY FROM THE URBAN MIDDLE AND LOWER-  
MIDDLE CLASSES (UNIONIZED WORKERS, STILL LED BY GANDHIAN  
BELIEVERS IN NON-VIOLENCE, WERE NOT ACTIVE). THE INTIAL TARGETS  
WERE GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE FOODGRAIN STORAGE DEPOTS AND RETAIL  
STORES. LEADERSHIP AND COORDINATION WERE PROVIDED BY THE  
NAVNIRMAN YUVAK SAMITI, AN AD HOC, LARGELY NON-POLITICAL  
GROUP OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS. AS THE NUMBER OF DEMONSTRATIONS  
AND THE DEATH TOLL MOUNTED (EVENTUALLY TO 50), THE OPPOSITION  
PARTIES-PRIMARILY JANA SANGH AND CONGRESS-O-HELPED ORGANIZE  
"BUNDHS" AND DISTURBANCES, BUT THE STUDENTS PLAYED THE MAJOR  
ROLE. THE GOVERNMENT RESPONSE WAS THE EXPECTED ONE--CURFEW AND  
APPEALS TO NEW DELHI FOR GRAIN. CHIEF MINISTER CHIMAMBHAI PATEL  
SACRIFICED HIS CIVIL SUPPLIES MINISTER TO NO AVAIL. "CORRUPT"  
CONGRESS MINISTERS AND LEGISLATORS--AND THEIR CARS AND HOMES--  
WERE ATTACKED BY DEMONSTRATORS. PATEL'S RIVALS WITHIN THE  
CONGRESS CALLED FOR A CABINET RESHUFFLE, PATEL'S RESIGNATION,  
EVEN "PRESIDENT'S RULE" FROM NEW DELHI. CALLING THE ARMY  
(WHICH CONTINUED TO LET THE POLICE DO THE FIRING) ONLY TEMPORARILY  
COWED THE CROWDS. WHEN VIOLENCE BROKE OUT ANEW AND MEMBERS OF  
PATEL'S CABINET BEGAN RESIGNING, HE QUIT FEBRUARY 9. "PRESIDENT'S  
RULE" WAS PROCLAIMED AND H.C. SARIN (THE OFFICIAL WHO HAD  
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CONTAINED THE ANDHRA AGITATION) WAS SENT TO ADVISE THE GOVERNOR.  
PATEL'S RESIGNATION DID NOT SATISFY THE STUDENTS--THEY HAVE  
CONTINUED THE AGITATION AND CONVINCED MOST OPPOSITION LEGISLATORS  
TO RESIGN. THE ARMY WAS WITHDRAWN TO AHMEDABAD CONTONMENT  
FEBRUARY 16. THE STUDENTS' FINAL DEMANDIS THE PROROGATION OF THE  
ASSEMBLY (IN WHICH THE CONGRESS HAS AN OVERWHELMING PAPER  
MAJORITY OF 140 OUT OF 167 SEATS) AND NEW ELECTIONS. FEBRUARY  
20 WAS THE WORST DAY OF VIOLENCE IN AHMEDABAD SINCE THE IMPOSITION  
OF PRESIDENT'S RULE.

3. MOST POLITICIANS AND OBSERVERS CONCENTRATED ON IMMEDIATE POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS. THE DECLARATION OF "PRESIDENT'S RULE" IN GAJARAT MIGHT UNDERMINE THE RULING PARTY'S CLAIM THAT ONLY THE CONGRESS CAN PROVIDE STABLE GOVERNMENT IN UTTAR PRADESH. THE FORTUNES OF THE CONGRESS-O ROSE; AGED MORARJI DESAI BEGAN DRAWING CROWDS AGAIN WITH CRITICISM OF THE PRIME MINISTER WHO THEN SHARED A SOUTHERN PLATFORM WITH CONGRESS-O VETERAN KAMARAJ). THERE WAS SPECULATION THAT THE MISHANDLING OF THE GAJARAT CRISIS HAD DEEPEENED THE RIFT BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND THE PRIME MINISTER. HE PUBLISHED A NOTE CRITICAL OF THE GOVERNMENT'S FOODGRAIN PROCUREMENT AND DISTRIBUTION POLICY, PUBLICLY STATED THAT THE FOODGRAIN TRADE TAKEOVER (WHEAT) WAS NOT UP TO EXPECTATIONS, AND WAS RUMORED TO HAVE TOLD HER THAT THE SUFFERING AND BLOODSHED WAS BEING PROLONGED BY HER EFFORTS TO PROP UP PATEL.

4. THREE OR FOUR MORE BASIC QUESTIONS DESERVE CONSIDERATION. THE FIRST IS WHETHER INDIA IS IN FOR A SUMMER OF URBAN VIOLENCE. THIS HAS TO BE SEEN AS PROBABLE. THE GOVERNMENT HAS NOT PROCURED ANYWHERE NEAR ENOUGH FOODGRAINS AND WILL FIND IT DIFFICULT TO AFFORD IMPORTS, ASSUMING GRAIN IS AVAILABLE ABROAD. OTHER CONSUMER NECESSITIES, "CIVIL SUPPLIES" (COAL, KEROSENE, DIESEL OIL, CEMENT), AND INDUSTRIAL RAW MATERIALS WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE IN SHORT SUPPLY. UNEMPLOYMENT MAY WELL INCREASE. THESE ELEMENTS SHOULD COMBINE TO PRODUCE VIOLENT BUT CONTROLLABLE URBAN DEMONSTRATIONS.

5. IS A ROUND OF RURAL AGITATION AND UNREST IN THE OFFING? RURAL RIOTS ARE RATE IN MOST OF INDIA; THAT THEY OCCURRED IN SURAT SHOCKED MANY. VIOLENT OUTBREAKS SEEM MOST PROBABLE IN THOSE FEW RELATIVELY ADVANCED DISTRICTS WHERE TENANTS OR  
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6. THE ROLE OF THE STUDENTS IN GUJARAT IS PERHAPS MOST NOTEWORTHY. NEVER BEFORE HAD STUDENTS PLAYED SO LARGE A PART IN BRINGING DOWN A STATE GOVERNMENT. CONGEN BOMBAY REPORTS THAT UNIVERSITY STUDENTS LED A SPONTANEOUS, "TRULY POPULAR" REVOLT AGAINST POLITICS FOR THE SAKE OF POLITICS AND IN FAVOR OF HONEST GOVERNMENT. THEY WERE NOT IDENTIFIED WITH ANY PARTICULAR PARTY, PERHAPS ONE REASON THEY GARNERED SUCH SUPPORT. IN OTHER STATES, ACTIVE STUDENTS HAVE LONG BEEN IDENTIFIED WITH AND USED BY POLITICAL PARTIES, MOSTLY THOSE OPPOSED TO THE CONGRESS. UNLESS STUDENT ACTIVISTS ESCHEW LIKE TIES WITH THE PARTIES, IT SEEMS DOUBTFUL THEY WILL BE ABLE TO RALLY IN OTHER STATES THE SUPPORT THEY ENJOY IN GUJARAHBM

7. HAVE THE EVENTS IN GUJARAT AFFECTED POLITICAL ATTITUDES WITHIN AND TOWARDS THE ARMY? THE AVAILABLE EVIDENCE IS FRAGMENTARY. RETIRED OFFICERS' CRITICISM OF LEFTIST TRENDS AND MISMANAGEMENT OF THE ECONOMY BY "CORRUPT POLITICIANS" IS INCREASING; EVEN ACTIVE OFFICERS APPEAR MORE OPEN IN THEIR DISCUSSION OF POLICY "ERRORS" AND CONSEQUENT CIVIL STRIFE.  
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THE ARMY REMAINS SINCERELY RELUCTANT TO GO "IN AID TO THE CIVIL POWER"; IF IT IS CALLED OUT REPEATEDLY, THE SOLDIERS MAY BECOME LESS APOLITICAL AND THE ARMY'S IMAGE AMONG THE PEOPLE WILL SUFFER. SOME CIVILIANS ARE INCREASINGLY SPECULATING ABOUT THE MILITARY HAVING TO STEP IN TO SET THE COUNTRY RIGHT. THESE MURMURS WOULD INCREASE IN VOLUME WERE OTHER STATES TO SUFFER POLITICAL-ADMINISTRATIVE BREAKDOWN AS IN GUJARAT.

8. WILL INDIA'S TIME-HONORED METHODS OF POLITICAL ACCOMMODATION, ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROL, AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT PROVE BANKRUPT IF THE GUJARAT PATTERN IS WRITTEN LARGE IN INDIA? HERE THE INDICATIONS ARE MURKY. GUJARAT HAD LONG BEEN KNOWN AS A RELATIVELY PROSPEROUS, WELL-ADMINISTERED, AND NOT PARTICULARLY CORRUPT STATE (ALTHOUGH PATEL, BY ALL ACCOUNTS, THOUGHT HE COULD BUY OFF ANYONE, INCLUDING STUDENTS). NEVERTHELESS, THE CONGRESS WAS UNABLE TO FINESSE THE DISTURBANCES BY THE USUAL CONCESSIONS AND ADJUSTMENTS. THE CIVIL ADMINISTRATION PROVED INCAPABLE OF ASSURING A STEADY (IF REDUCED) FLOW OF GRAIN AND OTHER NECESSITIES TO THE POOR.

THE POLICE--AND EVEN THE ARMY--COULD NOT COMPLETELY OVERAWE THE URBAN POPULACE. IF THIS CHAIN OF EVENTS COULD OCCUR IN GUJARAT, THE OUTLOOK FOR OTHER RELATIVELY URBANIZED STATES--MAHARASHTRA AND KERALA, FOR EXAMPLE--BECOMES LESS CERTAIN. CONGEN CALCUTTA BELIEVES THAT ADEQUATE ADMINISTRATIVE/DISTRIBUTIVE MACHINERY, AND LARGE SECURITY FORCES, SHOULD KEEP WEST BANGAL UNDER CONTROL.

9. THOUGHTFUL INDIANS ARGUE THAT ENTIRELY NEW STRUCTURES, METHODS, AND POLICIES MAY BE NEEDED TO COPE WITH THE PROBLEMS NOW CROWDING IN UPON THE COUNTRY, BUT THERE IS LITTLE CLARITY OR AGREEMENT ABOUT POSSIBLE CHANGES AND LESS CHANCE OF THEIR BEING IMPLEMENTED. AT A MINIMUM, THE EVENTS IN GUJARAT HAVE FURTHER SHAKEN THE COMPLACENCY OF THE RULING PARTY AND OFFICIAL ELITE; WHETHER THEY WILL BOTHER TO COME UP WITH NEW RESPONSES WILL DEPEND LARGELY ON WHETHER THE GUJARATI OUTBREAK BECOMES AN EPIDEMIC. BARRING A BAD MONSOON AND CONSEQUENT WIDESPREAD URBAN AGITATION AND RURAL DISTRESS, THE PROBABLE SUMMER SCENARIO SEEMS ONE OF SPORADIC, SCATTERED OUTBREAKS AND BREAKDOWNS WHICH THE GOVERNMENT CAN CONTAIN AND CORRECT ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS. AS HERETOFORE, FUNDAMENTAL REFORM WILL BE POSTPONED IN THE FACE OF IMMEDIATE EXIGENCIES.

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10. CONGEN VIEWS ARE REFLECTED IN THIS MESSAGE.  
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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** POLITICAL STABILITY, PUBLIC ATTITUDES, CIVIL DISORDERS, POLITICAL SITUATION, STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 22 FEB 1974  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** golinofr  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
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**Errors:** N/A  
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**Review Authority:** golinofr  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
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**Review Transfer Date:**  
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**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** GUJARAT AND THE NATION SUMMARY: THE UNDERLYING CAUSES OF THE CRISIS IN GUJARAT--  
**TAGS:** PINS, PINT, IN  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005